Supply Programme (AG&SP) Scheme for grant of interest subsidy to 10th Plan. A provision of Rs. 300 crores has been made in the budget for 2002-2003 for AG&SP Scheme.

Recruitment tests for army in regional languages

*255. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recruitment tests for selection into the Indian Army are conducted only in English and Hindi;

(b) whether any request from the States has been received in the Ministry for a change in the policy and to conduct recruitment tests in regional languages;

(c) if so, the details of requests from the States; and

(d) the steps taken on such requests?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) All tests for recruitment of lower ranks in the Army are conducted bilingually *i.e.* in Hindi and English. Examination for officers entry is conducted by the UPSC in English only.

A request to initiate appropriate policy change to conduct Army recruitment tests in regional languages has been received from the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. The request has been examined and a reply thereto has been sent stating that the test papers for recruitment of lower ranks in the Army are set in English and Hindi and are of elementary standard which even an individual with average knowledge can pass. In addition, the questions are explained to the candidates in the regional languages by employing teachers proficient in the local languages and the candidates are allowed additional time for this purpose. The language option for induction into Army is decided on the basis of the needs of day to day functioning and training requirements. Lack of knowledge of English and Hindi is thus likely to lead to a communication gap.